



MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

OFFICE OF THE CABINET SECRETARY

SPEECH BY

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**CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND
SOCIAL PROTECTION**

**DURING THE ADVOCACY FORUM ON URBAN SAFETY NET
RAISING THE SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOOR KENYA**

**STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS TO ADVANCE SOCIAL
PROTECTION FOR KENYA'S URBAN POOR**

HELD AT KICC NAIROBI

12TH NOVEMBER, 2020

Your Excellency The Ambassador European Union, Amb. Simon Mordue
Your Excellency The Danish Ambassador to Kenya, Amb. Ole Thonke
The UN Resident Coordinator Mr Siddharth Chatterjee
Oxfam Regional Director, Madam Lydia Zigomo
Dr Asha Mohamed, Kenya Red Cross Society
Members of the Diplomatic community present,
Development Partners present,
Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations present,
Staff from My Ministry present
All other agencies represented,
The fourth Estate
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

Let me from the onset appreciate everyone who in one way or the other has contributed to the uplifting of the living standards of the Poor and vulnerable in our country. It is the responsibility of the government to take care of all its people, and therefore when we find partners willing to assist in this endeavour, we are truly grateful. In this respect, let me single out the European Union who came at the start of Covid-19 pandemic to supplement the government efforts.

Having said that, let me also thank the organiser of this forum for bringing all of us together to share our experiences in the way we react to shock such as Covid-19 and hence come up with strategies that can withstand the test of time. On behalf of My Ministry and the Government of Kenya at large, we greatly value this engagement and the outcomes that will come out of it.

The question that has been put across to us is how can Social Safety Nets contribute towards efforts to reduce inequality in Kenya and achieve the development objectives of the Big four Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals?

Let me start by saying that, COVID-19 pandemic has had devastating effects on many economies globally and Kenya too has not been spared, driving many individuals and households deeper into poverty and brought to fore

new vulnerable individuals in our societies. As at 1st of September, 2020, statistics from Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) indicated that about 1.7 million Kenyans had lost their jobs both in the formal and informal economy, with the unemployment rate doubling from about 5.2% to 10.4% between March and September 2020. Similarly, statistics shows that about 3.2 million households are now in need of social assistance, out of which about 760,000 are in the informal settlements of our major cities.

Even before the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, the issue of providing social safety nets was something the Government was already dealing with through our three programmes under INUA Jamii namely; the Cash Transfer programme for *Orphan and Vulnerable Children, Older Persons and Persons with Severe Disabilities*, a programme which has so far, disbursed a total of **Kes.166.9 Billion** to **1,233,129** poor households who include **353,000 Orphans and Vulnerable Children, 833,129 Older Persons** and **47,000 Persons with Severe Disabilities**. Is this support enough to cover every needy case in our country, not at all, it is for this reason that we welcome the support of our friends and partners.

In order to cushion the poor and vulnerable members of our society, who are currently not beneficiaries of the Inua Jamii Programme, at the onset of the outbreak of Covid-19, the Government allocated **Kes.10 billion** as an emergency cash transfer programme in April 2020, to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic among the vulnerable households. Through this funding, a total of **333,200 beneficiary** households from all the 47 counties have been supported with each household receiving **Kes.1000 on a weekly basis** through mobile money transfer.

It is evident therefore that the Social Protection system in Kenya has over the years supported millions of vulnerable Kenyans and hence prevented their descent into poverty, shielding them from the impact of crisis, and enabling them to access basic services.

On the question of **how this system is contributing to achieving the Big Four Agenda and other Government of Kenya goals**, Let me start by stating that in Kenya, **Social Protection is a Constitutional right and not a charity**. The Constitution of Kenya has clearly articulated these

Rights under the Bill of Rights in a number of Articles but more specifically in Article 43 under economic and social rights where articles 43(1)(a-f) and 43(3) clearly speak to the key basic elements which if not addressed would lead to increased poverty and inequality.

Secondly, **Social protection is an Investment and not a ‘cost’**, there is clear and strong evidence both locally and internationally that points to the fact that economies tend to perform better by investing in Social Protection and that greater investments in Social Assistance Programs or Social Safety Nets are strong drivers to inclusive economic growth and development. Well-designed Social Safety Nets open up productive and livelihood opportunities for these segments of the populations by addressing some of the barriers that facilitate inequality and inequity in the society.

Backed by the Constitutional provisions highlighted above, the government of Kenya together with other stakeholders have initiated and implemented various Social Assistance programmes geared towards improving access to healthcare, education, food security and nutrition and, affordable housing for the many poor and vulnerable Kenyans who would have otherwise plunged deeper into poverty.

On the issue of access to affordable and quality healthcare, Social protection links directly with the Big 4 agenda on Universal Health Coverage (UHC), while the Agenda on food security and nutrition blends perfectly with the Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection that apart from other specific interventions by various agencies, is now in the national domain through one of the components under the big Social Protection project- the Kenya Social Economic Inclusion Project (KSEIP).

Education is a key equalizer in any society and improving access to education is a primary initiative that does not solely sit within the confines of the Ministry of education but clearly harmonizes with Social Protection for better outcomes. Our government has an ambitious development Agenda, ‘The Big 4’ and my Ministry is an enabler of the realisation of this Big4 Agenda. For our country to build houses, Increase food production, provide universal

health care and increase the contribution of our Manufacturing sector, we need Manpower, and not just any manpower, we need well skilled manpower.

For this to happen, children must be kept in school, so that they can acquire the requisite skills. The School Meals programs, the free Primary and Secondary education, the bursary schemes and scholarships are just but a few examples which have given great opportunities to many children from poor and vulnerable backgrounds to excel in life. Keeping Children in school, ensures that eventually they transit to tertiary institution where they can gain skills and hence contribute to skilled workforce for the fulfilment of the Big 4 Agenda.

On the question of how Social Protection System contribute to other government Goals, greater benefits, impacts and evidence has been seen with the current National Safety Net Programs (NSNP) with regards to; increased purchasing power of beneficiaries, local economic stimulus, dietary and nutritional diversity, increased individual and household productivity through initiation of small income generating ventures eg chicken, goats and sheep rearing and accumulation of asset.

On the question of how Social safety nets contribute to Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals agenda has a clear connection with Social Protection and by extension the Social Safety Nets. For example SDG No.1 on ending poverty, Target 1.3 clearly speaks to inclusion where countries are called to ‘implement nationally appropriate Social Protection Systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2040 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and vulnerable’.

Similarly, Goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls, goal No. 8 on decent work and also Goal No. 10 on reduced inequalities have very specific targets that directly speak to Social Protection and by extension Social Assistance.

In summary therefore, our Social Safety Nets are making significant contributions to our national development agenda and is indeed an enabler to the national economic and developmental aspirations. Social Safety Nets are

therefore prudent measures for not only cushioning our populations but also for equity and inclusive growth.

Distinguished guests,

As I conclude therefore, let me state that an **Integrated Approach** to shock response is **‘not one of the ways, but is the only way’** towards an effective response and all of us must accept to **‘deliver as One’** as is commonly used under the UN partners strategy for operation. Let us therefore develop stronger relations and partnerships so as to synergize for more efficient and effective delivery so that we can together realize the dream of **“Leaving no one behind”** as we strive to reduce poverty, inequality and exclusion.

Finally, let me extend my appreciation to the Ambassador for the European Union, Simon Mordue, and all the Members of the European Union, The United Nations, all our development partners and the various agencies who have been in the forefront of implementing various social safety net programmes in our country. Your efforts is not in vain and together we will overcome this pandemic and move to higher level of development.

THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU ALL